

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 IO-13 /045 W
-----120904Z 014950 /11

R 111640Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1834
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSULATE MUNICH
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, CSCE, CZ
SUBJECT: CHARTER 77

REFS A. 76 PRAGUE 3654(NOTAL) B. PRAGUE 0065

1. SUMMARY: THE CZECHOSLOVAK DISSIDENTS' CHARTER 77 DECLARATION IS STILL VERY MUCH A STORY IN THE MAKING, AND IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE DUST SETTLES. HOWEVER, THE MAIN OUTLINES OF THE EVENT AND ITS AFTERMATH ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. APPARENTLY SOME TIME IN THE WORKS (REF A), ACTUAL TEXT OF "CHARTER 77" HUMAN RIGHTS PROTEST SURFACED FIRST IN FRG AND IN PARIS. TEXTS AND EXCERPTS WHICH APPEARED IN LE MONDE AND TIMES OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LONDON JANUARY 7 CORRESPOND TO CZECH TEXT. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE YET TO SEE A FULL LISTING OF THE SIGNATURES--WHICH WE HEAR PRESENTLY TOTALS APPROXIMATELY 300.

3. ACCORDING TO FRG DCM GIESDER, SIX LEADING PERSONALITIES INVOLVED IN CHARTER 77 TOOK THE DOCUMENT TO THE OFFICES OF PRIME MINISTER STROUGAL, FEDERAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN INDRA AND CZECHOSLOVAK PRESS

BUREAU, CTK, ON JANUARY 6. AT CTK, THEY WERE SURROUNDED BY POLICE AND ARRESTED, BUT RELEASED WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

4. THE ARRESTS, OR DETENTIONS FOR QUESTIONING, HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED IN ALL CASES SO FAR BY RELEASES. THIS TECHNIQUE PERMITS AUTHORITIES TO COMPLY WITH LETTER OF LAW REQUIRING A WRIT TO BE ISSUED IF DETAINEE IS TO BE HELD LONGER THAN 48 HOURS. THUS PROMINENT DISSIDENTS HAVEL, VACULIK AND HAJEK HAVE BEEN DETAINED REPEATEDLY AND REPEATEDLY RELEASED.

5. WE UNDERSTAND BBC HAS REPORTED THAT A NEW DECLARATION HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY THE DISSIDENTS TO PROTEST THE CURRENT WAVE OF ARRESTS. THOSE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED JANUARY 10, INCLUDING THE THREE NAMED ABOVE, WERE REPORTEDLY RELEASED AGAIN JANUARY 11.

6. MALCOLM BROWNE OF NEW YORK TIMES, WHOSE FORTUITOUS PRESENCE IN PRAGUE HAS ENABLED HIM TO FILE DETAILED REPORTS ADDRESSEES WILL BY THIS TIME HAVE SEEN, TELLS US THAT ON THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 10 HE WAS PRESENT AT THE HOUSE OF PLAYWRIGHT PAVEL KOHOUT AS THE POLICE WERE ATTEMPTING TO PLACE KOHOUT UNDER ARREST. BROWNE MANAGED TO HAVE A WORD WITH KOHOUT THROUGH A DOOR AND LEARNED THAT POLICE HAD RESORTED

TO FORCE IN ARRESTING KOHOUT'S WIFE, WHO RESISTED THE ARREST. POLICE ASKED BROWNE TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF, BUT DID NOT MISTREAT HIM OR PREVENT HIM FROM FILING HIS REPORT.

7. SAMPLING OF LOCAL CZECHOSLOVAK OPINION CARRIED OUT BY WEST GERMANS

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AND OURSELVES SUGGESTS THAT CHARTER 77 HAS NOT EVOKED MUCH INTEREST AMONG THE CZECH POPULACE, SOME OF WHOM REGARD IT AS "INTELLECTUAL GAMESMANSHIP". OUR GERMAN COLLEAGUES THINK THERE COULD BE SOME COALESCING OF OPPOSITION FORCES AROUND CHARTER 77, NAMELY, "DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS", EX-COMMUNISTS, AND NON-PARTY IDEALISTS, BUT THAT REAL DANGER WOULD BE A RALLYING OF THE APPROXIMATELY 360,000 EX-PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE YET TO BE REASSIMILATED INTO CZECHOSLOVAK POLITICAL LIFE. SUCH A RALLYING OF FORCES PRESENTLY APPEARS OUT OF THE QUESTION, OUR GERMAN AND OTHER NATO COLLEAGUES HERE AGREE.

8. ON JANUARY 7 JUST AS CHARTER 77 NEWS WAS BREAKING, A CZECH LAWYER AND FORMER DIPLOMAT WHO WAS ONCE AN AIDE TO FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER JIRI HAJEK, ONE OF THE SIGNATORIES OF CHARTER 77, TOLD US HE WAS CERTAIN THAT PRESIDENT HUSAK HAS FOUND INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HERE INDISPENSABLE TO HIM IN IMPLEMENTING HIS MODERATE VIEWS. THE FORMER DIPLOMAT, VRATISLAV PECHOTA, ALSO BELIEVES THAT HUSAK IS THE MAIN FIGURE IN THE REGIME WHO

HAS RESISTED ARRESTS OF 1968 POLITICAL FIGURES AND OTHER DISSIDENTS
AND FOA VORED RELEASE OF THOSE IN JAIL--FOR EXAMPLE THE FOUR RELEASED
LAST MONTH. ONE OF THOSE FOUR, MILAN HUEBL, IS A SIGNER AND

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POSSIBLY A CO-AUTHOR OF CHARTER 77. WE ARE INTERESTED IN WHAT
MAY HAPPEN TO HIM, AS WE UNDERSTAND HIS RELEASE LAST MONTH WAS
CONDITIONAL ON GOOD BEHAVIOR.

9. COMMENT: WE DO NOT THINK CHARTER 77 CAN BE CONSTRUED AS A
CALL FOR OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. ON THE CONTRARY,
WE BELIEVE IT WAS CAREFULLY WORDED TO AVOID GIVING THAT IMPRESSION.
WE DO SEE IT AS A COURAGEOUS, BUT, IN THE END PROBABLY FUTILE
ATTEMPT, AT LEAST IN THE NEAR TERM, TO PRESSURE GOC INTO A MORE
LIBERAL LINE ON CSCE IMPLEMENTATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. WE
THINK IT LIKELY, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE APPARENT INDECISIVENESS
OF THE PRAGUE AUTHORITIES IN DEALING WITH THE SIGNERS OF CHARTER 77--
ARRESTING THEM AND THEN RELEASING THEM--THAT THERE ARE NOT ONLY
DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WITHIN THE RULING GROUP AS TO WHAT LINE TO
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TAKE, BUT THAT THE QUESTION WILL HAVE TO BE RESOLVED
IN CLOSE COORDINATION WITH MOSCOW. FORMER DIPLOMAT PECHOTA'S
CONVICTION THAT HUSAK NEEDS HUMAN RIGHTS AGITATION TO DEMONSTRATE THAT

HIS COMPARATIVELY LENIENT, CONCILIATORY POLICY IS THE CORRECT ONE
FOR PRESENT-DAY CZECHOSLOVAKI INTRIGUES US.

10. WE CONSIDER IT TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER HUSAK WILL EMERGE
FROM THIS AFFAIR WITH HIS POSITION STRENGTHENED. IN ANY CASE,
WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY MAJOR SHIFTS OF POLICY TOWARDS GREATER
LIBERALIZATION. FOR THE GOC TO GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE CHARTER 77
SIGNERS OR THEIR ILK WOULD BE TO OPEN FLOOD-GATES, WHICH THE
EVENTS OF 1968 AMPLY DEMONSTRATED CANNOT BE EASILY CLOSED.
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